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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

April 10, 2000

BY HAND

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
12th Street Lobby
TWA-325
Washington, D.C. 20554

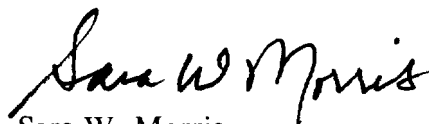
**Re: Comments of Thomson Consumer Electronics, Inc. in support
 of the Expedited Petition for Rulemaking filed by the
 Consumer Electronics Association (ET Docket No. 97-206)**

Dear Ms. Salas:

Enclosed for filing please find the original and nine (9) copies of the Comments of Thomson Consumer Electronics, Inc. in the above-referenced docket.

Please stamp and return to this office with the courier the enclosed extra copy of this filing designated for that purpose. Please direct any questions that you may have to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



Sara W. Morris
Telecommunications Consultant

Enclosures

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BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

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APR 10 2000

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)	
)	
Technical Requirements to Enable Blocking of)	ET Docket No. 97-206
Video Programming Based on Program Ratings)	
)	
Implementation of Sections 551(c), (d), and (e))	
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996)	

COMMENTS OF
THOMSON CONSUMER ELECTRONICS, INC.

I. INTRODUCTION.

Pursuant to Section 1.4 and 1.405 of the Commission's rules, Thomson Consumer Electronics, Inc. ("Thomson") respectfully submits these comments on the Consumer Electronics Association's ("CEA") *Expedited Petition for Rulemaking* ("the CEA Petition") to initiate a rulemaking proceeding for the purpose of specifying requirements for "V-Chip" program blocking capability in digital television receivers.^{1/} Thomson supports the CEA Petition and believes timely consideration of this matter will ensure that V-Chip program blocking technology is available seamlessly as television fulfills its potential as a truly digital medium.

II. STATEMENT OF INTEREST.

Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, Thomson is the market leader in U.S. sales of color TV receivers, VCRs, and, most recently, digital high definition ("HDTV") set-top

^{1/} See Public Notice Report No. 2394 (rel. March 9, 2000).

receivers, which are marketed under the RCA and PROSCAN brand names.^{2/} One out of every five television products sold in the United States is a Thomson product. Thomson employs more than 7,000 Americans working in facilities across the nation.

Thomson is an industry leader in the development of both V-Chip program blocking capability and the terrestrial digital television ("DTV") system adopted for use in the United States.^{3/} Indeed, the V-Chip has become an important – even a competitive – feature in Thomson's television product line.^{4/}

Thomson commends the Commission for implementing the V-Chip provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act^{5/} in a manner that: (a) expedited the availability of V-Chip capability to parents while not unnecessarily disrupting manufacturers' existing product design and manufacturing cycles; and (b) provides manufacturers with sufficient flexibility to further innovate in response to market demands. Thomson believes these same principles should guide the Commission's adoption of rules for digital V-Chip program blocking capability.

^{2/} Thomson's digital TV product line ranges from its DTC100 set-top receiver, to direct-view and projection high-resolution monitors, to direct-view and projection, fully-integrated HDTV sets. All of Thomson's digital receiver products are capable of receiving both analog and digital television signals (as well as programming transmitted via DIRECTV satellite service and standard cable) and include V-Chip program blocking capability in accordance with Section 15.120 of the Commission's rules. (47 C.F.R. § 15.120)

^{3/} As a member of both the Advanced Television Research Consortium and, later, the digital HDTV "Grand Alliance," Thomson has been heavily involved in the development of digital over-the-air broadcast television technology for more than a decade, and particularly in the design of the DTV transmission standard for terrestrial broadcasting which was adopted by the Commission in 1996.

^{4/} For instance, in addition to blocking programming based on its age-based rating (i.e., TV-PG, TV-MA) and content descriptor (i.e., "V," "S," "L," etc.) Thomson offers consumers the ability to block programming that is unrated, such as news and sports, some of which may be deemed by parents to be overly violent or frightening to young children.

^{5/} Pub. L. 104-104, 111 Stat. 56 (1996), § 551(c), (d) and (e).

III. THOMSON SUPPORTS THE CEA PETITION AND URGES THE COMMISSION TO INITIATE AN EXPEDITED RULEMAKING FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCORPORATING BY REFERENCE EIA-766 INTO ITS RULES.

As discussed in the CEA *Petition*, and consistent with the Commission's *V-Chip Technical Report and Order*,^{5/} Thomson has offered V-Chip program blocking capability in all of its 13" or larger television models since January 1, 2000.^{6/} Prior to that date, Thomson included V-Chip capability in at least half of all similarly-sized models as early as May 1999 – two months ahead of the Commission's mandated timetable.^{7/} While the focus of this compliance to date has been on analog televisions,^{8/} Thomson also has incorporated V-Chip program blocking in its line of digital television products, relying on portions of the recently adopted EIA-766 standard.^{9/} Thomson agrees with CEA that the formal incorporation by reference of EIA-766 in the Commission's rules is necessary and consistent with both the Commission's approach to analog V-Chip requirements, and the manner in which broadcasters will be transmitting V-Chip program ratings in their digital signals.^{10/}

Importantly, Thomson urges that, as it did for analog V-Chip requirements, the

^{5/} See *Report and Order* in ET Docket No. 97-206, 13 FCC Rcd 11248 (1998) ("*V-Chip Technical Report and Order*").

^{6/} *Id.* at 11258-59.

^{7/} *Id.*

^{8/} Pursuant to EIA-744 and EIA-608, which are incorporated by reference into the Commission's rules at 47 C.F.R. § 15.120(d)(1).

^{9/} EIA-766 is entitled, "U.S. Rating Region Table (RRT) and Content Advisory Descriptor for Transport of Content Advisory Information Using ATSC 4/65 Program and System Information Protocol (PSIP)."

^{10/} Thomson concurs with CEA (*see Petition* at 3) that § 15.120(d) of its rules should be amended to apply the same treatment to EIA-766 and EIA-708 for digital receivers that is accorded EIA-744 and EIA-608 (for analog receivers) in § 15.120(d)(1).

Commission refrain from adopting multiple standards for V-Chip program blocking in digital receivers and provide DTV receiver manufacturers with the flexibility necessary to adapt further innovations on a market basis.^{11/}

Thomson also supports the CEA *Petition's* proposed 36-month timetable for manufacturers to comply fully with the new standard,^{12/} particularly to allow sufficient time for new receiver chip design, to allow time for all broadcasters to begin sending the appropriate digital data, and, perhaps most importantly, to allow time for product testing in a “real-world” environment – a critical step needed to ensure that digital TV receivers are fully functional with the digital V-Chip ratings information when it is actually transmitted by broadcasters. As mentioned above, the Commission’s adoption of a reasonable time frame for compliance with its initial V-Chip requirements ensured that this technology reached consumers as quickly as possible, but not so quickly that manufacturers risked bringing to market products that compromised either technical standards of quality or overall consumer acceptability.

Finally, consistent with its position in the *DTV Closed Captioning Proceeding*, Thomson supports the CEA *Petition's* recommendation that the Commission apply its digital V-Chip technical requirements based upon the *vertical height* – as opposed to the diagonal measurement – of a DTV’s display, and that that height requirement be set at 7.8 inches or greater.^{13/} A

^{11/} See *V-Chip Technical Report and Order* at ¶ 11: “Although we are not mandating that TV receiver manufacturers provide for alternative rating systems, we encourage manufacturers to design TV receivers to provide for additional rating systems to the extent practical. *We believe that manufacturers will be driven by the marketplace to meet any consumer demands to accommodate additional rating systems.*” (emphasis added).

^{12/} See CEA *Petition* at 4.

^{13/} See Comments of Thomson Consumer Electronics in ET Docket 99-254, *In the Matter of Closed Captioning Requirements for Digital Television Receivers*, at 11-13.

vertical measurement standard is better suited to DTV receivers' more rectangular screen shape, and maintains consistency with the Commission's closed captioning rules, should it adopt a similar approach in that proceeding.

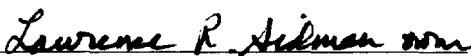
IV. CONCLUSION.

For the aforementioned reasons, Thomson urges the Commission to GRANT the CEA *Petition*.

Respectfully submitted,

THOMSON CONSUMER ELECTRONICS, INC.

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April 10, 2000

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Bridget Y. Monroe, a secretary for the law firm of Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand, Chartered, hereby certify that on this Tenth (10th) day of April, 2000, I caused a copy of the foregoing "Comments on behalf of Thomson Consumer Electronics, Inc." to be sent, by first class United States mail, postage prepaid (* or by hand delivery), to each of the following:

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